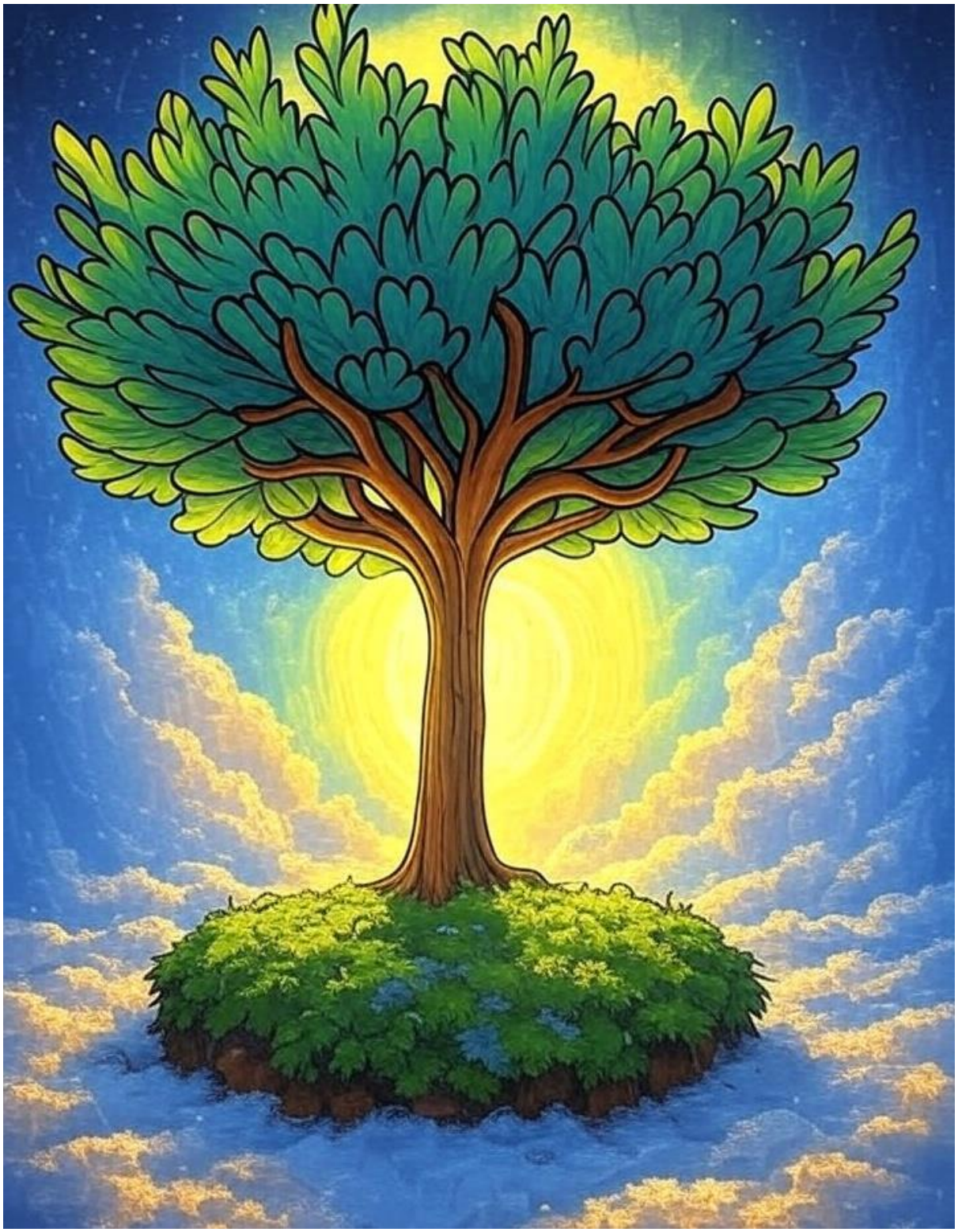

The Epic Story of God, Israel, and the Church

About this document

This document has been prepared to help the reader better understand the relationship between Israel and the Church, and the roles that each play in God's grand plan for mankind. By examining this relationship from a Biblical perspective, it is hoped that we might be able to dispel certain misconceptions that have confused believers and have strained the relationship between Jew and Gentile throughout history.

Thank you to Anthony Loring, whose five-part sermon series "*Israel, The Church and Our King Jesus*" as published on the New Gen City Podcast formed both the impetus of this document, and the key thematic content underpinning it.

Thank you also to the late J. David Pawson, whose sermons and books have given me a heart for this subject, and a commitment towards fostering mutual understanding and reconciliation of Jew and Christian, for the sake of God's Kingdom.

All Bible translations in this document are sourced from the New International Version.

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The Epic Story of God, Israel, and the Church

Imagine a story so vast it spans the entirety of human history, from the dawn of creation to the end of time. This is the story of God, Israel, and the Church - a narrative of divine love, human failure, and ultimate redemption. At its core is a God who makes promises and keeps them, a nation chosen to be a light to the world, and a Church called to carry that light to every corner of the earth.

This is not just history - it's our story, and it's still unfolding.

Chapter 1: The Beginning: God's Covenant with Abraham

Adam, Eve and the Fall of Man

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. With a word, he brought light into darkness, order into chaos. He fashioned the stars, the seas, the land, and all living things. But his crowning achievement was humanity - Adam and Eve, made in his own image, to reflect his glory and rule over creation. They walked with God in the garden of Eden, in perfect harmony and peace. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), and on the sixth day, "God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

But that peace was shattered when they chose to disobey God, tempted by the serpent. Sin entered the world, bringing death, suffering, and separation from God. God created Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, a paradise filled with every kind of tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. In the middle of the garden were two special trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God commanded them, "You may eat freely from every tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

But the serpent, who was craftier than any of the wild animals, said to Eve, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” Eve replied, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said, “You will not certainly die. For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:1-5).

Tempted by the serpent’s words, Eve took some of the fruit and ate it. She also gave some to Adam, who was with her, and he ate it. Immediately, their eyes were opened, and they realised they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. When God came to walk in the garden, Adam and Eve hid from him. God called out, “Where are you?” Adam answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” (Genesis 3:8-11).

Thus, sin entered the world, and with it, death and separation from God. But even in this moment, God provided a glimmer of hope. He cursed the serpent and said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15). This is the first promise of a Saviour who would defeat the serpent, a foreshadowing of Jesus, who would arrive centuries later.

God’s Covenant with Abraham

Generations passed, and humanity grew increasingly wicked. God sent a flood to cleanse the earth, sparing only Noah and his family. But sin persisted, and at Babel, people tried to build a tower to heaven, defying God. He confused their languages, scattering them across the earth. “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). But the Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other” (Genesis 11:6-7).

It was in this divided world that God chose one man, Abraham, to begin a new chapter in his redemptive plan. Abraham, originally named Abram, lived in Ur of the Chaldeans, a prosperous city in Mesopotamia. He was married to Sarai, who was barren, and they had no children. Despite this, God called him to leave his homeland and go to a place he would show him. God promised, “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2-3).

Abraham obeyed, taking his wife, his nephew Lot, and all their possessions, and set out for Canaan. When they arrived, God appeared to him and said, “To your offspring I will give this land” (Genesis 12:7). Thus, the land of Canaan was promised to Abraham’s descendants, a promise central to God’s plan for Israel, their unique role, and the land’s divine ownership (Exodus 19:5-6, Deuteronomy 4:20).

However, Abraham and Sarai were getting older, and they still had no children. Sarai, in her desperation, gave her servant Hagar to Abraham to bear a child on her behalf, a common practice at the time. Hagar conceived and bore Ishmael, but God made it clear that the promised child would come through Sarai. When Abraham was 99 years old, God appeared to him again, reaffirming the covenant and changing his name from Abram to Abraham, meaning “father of many nations.” God also changed Sarai’s name to Sarah and promised that she would bear a son. Abraham laughed at the idea, as did Sarah later, but God insisted, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14).

True to his word, Sarah gave birth to Isaac when Abraham was 100 years old. Isaac was the child of promise, through whom the covenant would continue. Then came the ultimate test of Abraham’s faith. God commanded him, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love - Isaac - and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you” (Genesis 22:2). Abraham obeyed without hesitation, believing that God could even raise the dead (Hebrews 11:19). As he was about to sacrifice Isaac, the angel of the Lord stopped him, and God provided a ram as a substitute. This event foreshadowed God’s own sacrifice of his son, Jesus, who would be the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, a connection that ties to the Church’s faith today. Just as God provided a ram for Isaac, he provided Jesus as the substitute for our sins.

Through Isaac came Jacob, who was later named Israel, and from him, the twelve patriarchs who became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, the nation of Israel was born, destined to be God’s special possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, through whom the Messiah would come to bless the whole world (Exodus 19:6, Deuteronomy 7:6-8). This blessing to all nations, as promised to Abraham, finds its fulfilment in Jesus, who invites people from every tribe and tongue to be part of God’s family, the Church, showing the deep connection between Israel’s role and the Church’s mission.

Chapter 2: Israel's Formation and Struggles

The story of God and his people Israel didn't end with Abraham's faith or Isaac's miraculous birth. It was just the beginning. God had promised Abraham a nation, a land, and a blessing for all the world (Genesis 12:2-3), but turning a family into a nation wasn't going to be easy. The descendants of Jacob - now called Israel - would face slavery, rebellion, and miracles that would shape them into God's chosen people. This chapter traces their journey from Egypt's chains to Canaan's battles, revealing a God who rescues, disciplines, and never gives up, even when his people stumble. Through it all, we'll see "types and shadows" pointing to Jesus and connections to the Church, showing how this ancient story is our story too.

From a Family to a People: Joseph's Rise

After Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the story shifts to Jacob's twelve sons - the fathers of Israel's twelve tribes. One of them, Joseph, becomes the key to their survival. Joseph was the favoured son, gifted a colourful coat by his father, which sparked jealousy among his brothers (Genesis 37:3-4). He dreamed of ruling over them, stars and sheaves bowing, which didn't help their tempers (Genesis 37:5-11). In a fit of rage, they sold him to traders heading for Egypt, dipping his coat in goat's blood to fake his death (Genesis 37:31-32). It was a brutal betrayal, but God was at work, weaving their sin into his plan.

In Egypt, Joseph's life was a rollercoaster. Sold as a slave to Potiphar, a high official, he rose to manage the household, only to be falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and thrown into prison (Genesis 39:1-20). Even there, God was with him, giving him favour with the jailer and wisdom to interpret dreams (Genesis 39:21-23). When Pharaoh had troubling dreams - seven fat cows eaten by seven skinny ones, seven healthy grain stalks swallowed by seven withered ones - no one could explain them (Genesis 41:1-8). Joseph, summoned from prison, said, "God reveals dreams," and foretold seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine (Genesis 41:16, 25-32). Impressed, Pharaoh made him second-in-command, overseeing Egypt's food stores (Genesis 41:40-41).

When famine hit, Joseph's foresight saved Egypt and beyond. His brothers came from Canaan, begging for grain, not recognising him. Joseph tested them, revealing their guilt over his betrayal, but ultimately forgave them, saying, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20). Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers (Genesis 50:20) mirrors Christ's forgiveness on the cross (Luke 23:34), reinforcing the connection to the

Church's call to forgive (Colossians 3:13). Joseph brought Jacob and the whole family - 70 people in total - to Egypt's fertile Goshen region, where they thrived (Genesis 46:27).

This story of Joseph, being betrayed whilst saving his family, prophetically foreshadows the life of Jesus, who was betrayed, whilst saving mankind. Joseph's rise from pit to palace also mirrors Christ's death and resurrection - a theme that ties Israel's story to the Church's hope.

Slavery and a Cry for Deliverance

But Egypt's hospitality didn't last. A new Pharaoh arose "who did not know about Joseph" (Exodus 1:8), and he saw the growing Israelite population as a threat. He enslaved them, forcing them to build cities like Pithom and Rameses under brutal conditions - whips cracking, quotas rising (Exodus 1:11-14). To curb their numbers, he ordered their baby boys be drowned in the Nile (Exodus 1:22). Imagine the mothers' terror, hiding their sons from soldiers. Yet God heard their cries, as he always does when his people suffer (Exodus 2:23-25).

Enter Moses, a Hebrew baby spared by God's providence. His mother hid him in a basket among Nile reeds, where Pharaoh's daughter found and adopted him, raising him as a prince (Exodus 2:5-10). But Moses knew his roots. At 40, seeing an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, he killed the oppressor and fled to Midian, becoming a shepherd (Exodus 2:11-15). There, at 80, God met him in a burning bush that didn't burn up, saying, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt… I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:7, 10). Moses hesitated, stammering, "Who am I that I should go?" (Exodus 3:11). God replied, "I will be with you," and gave signs: a staff turning to a snake, a hand turning leprous then clean (Exodus 4:2-7).

The Exodus: God's Mighty Hand

Moses returned with his brother Aaron, confronting Pharaoh: "Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:1). Pharaoh scoffed, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" (Exodus 5:2), and doubled their workload. So God sent ten plagues, each striking Egypt's false gods. The Nile turned to blood, mocking their river god Hapi. Frogs, locusts, and darkness humiliated their deities (Exodus 7-10). The final plague was the death of every firstborn, from Pharaoh's heir to the lowliest slave's child (Exodus 11:5). God spared Israel through the Passover: they slaughtered a lamb, smeared its blood on their doorposts, and ate in haste. That night, the destroyer passed over homes marked with blood, but struck Egypt's firstborns (Exodus 12:12-13).

Pharaoh relented, and about two million Israelites - 600,000 men, plus women and children - fled (Exodus 12:37).

Pharaoh changed his mind, chasing them to the Red Sea with chariots. Trapped, the Israelites cried, “It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” (Exodus 14:12). Moses stretched out his staff, and God parted the sea - walls of water towering, ground dry beneath (Exodus 14:21-22). Israel crossed, but when Egypt pursued, the waters collapsed, drowning them (Exodus 14:27-28). Miriam led the women in song: “Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea” (Exodus 15:21). This story of deliverance, central to Israel’s identity, is a foreshadowing of Christian salvation through Christ’s blood; as the Passover lamb foreshadows Jesus, “our Passover lamb” (1 Corinthians 5:7), linking Israel’s story to the Church’s redemption.

Sinai: A Covenant and a Calling

God led Israel to Mount Sinai, where he would make them his nation. In a storm of fire and thunder, he spoke: “If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6). This Mosaic Covenant, unlike Abraham’s unconditional promise, depended on their obedience. God gave the Ten Commandments - no other gods, no idols, honour parents, don’t murder, steal, or covet (Exodus 20:3-17) - and detailed laws on worship, justice, and daily life (Exodus 21-23). These weren’t just rules; they revealed God’s character - holy, just, compassionate - and set Israel apart to shine his light to the nations, a role echoed in the Church’s call to be “a light to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:47).

The people vowed, “Everything the Lord has said we will do” (Exodus 24:3), and Moses sealed it with blood (Exodus 24:8). They built a tabernacle, a tent where God’s presence dwelt among them, with an ark, altar, and priests (Exodus 25-27). But before Moses could finish receiving God’s instructions, Israel rebelled, crafting a golden calf and saying, “These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt!” (Exodus 32:4). After such a rescue, their idolatry was a slap in God’s face. He threatened to destroy them, but Moses interceded, pleading, “Why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?” (Exodus 32:11). God relented, though thousands died for their sin (Exodus 32:28). This pattern - sin, judgement, mercy - would mark Israel’s story, showing God’s patience, a trait that the Church relies on today (2 Peter 3:9).

Wilderness Wanderings: Testing and Trust

For 40 years, Israel wandered in the wilderness, learning to trust God. When they first neared Canaan, they sent twelve spies. Ten returned terrified - “The people are giants; we’re like grasshoppers!” - but Joshua and Caleb urged, “If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land” (Numbers 13:30, 14:8). Alas, the people sided with fear, wailing, “Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword?” (Numbers 14:3). God declared, “Not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me… will ever see the land” (Numbers 14:22-23). Only Joshua and Caleb entered, an historical lesson in faith and trust for the church today (Hebrews 3:16-19).

God sustained them - manna from heaven, water from a rock, even quail when they craved meat (Exodus 16:13-15, 17:6). He led them with a cloud by day and fire by night (Exodus 13:21). Yet they grumbled, tested God, and faced consequences, like fiery snakes sent as judgement, healed only by looking at a bronze serpent Moses raised (Numbers 21:6-9). This tale served as another prophetic foreshadowing, as Jesus said, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up” (John 3:14).

Conquest and Chaos: Entering the Land

After Moses died, Joshua led Israel across the Jordan River, parted like the Red Sea (Joshua 3:16-17). They conquered Jericho, marching seven days until the walls fell at their shout (Joshua 6:20). City by city, they claimed Canaan, though some enemies lingered due to incomplete obedience (Joshua 13:1). God’s promise to Abraham was taking shape - the land was theirs, a place of “wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates… olive oil and honey” (Deuteronomy 8:8). But after Joshua, chaos crept in. Without a strong leader, “everyone did as they saw fit” (Judges 21:25).

The judges’ period was a cycle: Israel worshipped idols like Baal, enemies oppressed them, they cried out, and God sent judges to save them. Deborah, a prophetess, led with Barak to crush Sisera’s 900 chariots (Judges 4:14-16). Gideon, with 300 men, smashed pots and routed Midianites (Judges 7:19-22). Samson, strong but flawed, with long flowing locks, toppled a Philistine temple (Judges 16:30). These stories show God’s mercy despite Israel’s failures, a pattern the Church sees in its own need for grace (Romans 5:20).

Pointing to Christ and the Church

As we can see, many of Israel’s iconic identity-defining stories, reach their ultimate fulfilment in our Lord, Jesus Christ. The Passover lamb, sparing Israel from death,

prefigures Jesus, “our Passover lamb” (1 Corinthians 5:7). The tabernacle, where God dwelt, points to Christ’s incarnation and the Church as his body, where his Spirit resides (John 1:14, 1 Corinthians 3:16). Moses, interceding for a rebellious people, mirrors Jesus, our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). The bronze serpent, healing those who looked to it, foreshadows the cross, where faith in Christ brings life (John 3:14-15). Israel’s call as a “kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6) connects to the Church’s role as a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9), showing our shared mission to reflect God.

God’s Faithful Pursuit

Israel’s journey from Egypt to Canaan wasn’t smooth. They were chosen not for their strength but because “the Lord set his affection on you and loved you” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). Their failures - golden calf, wilderness grumbling, incomplete conquests - highlight both God’s grace and his sovereignty (Psalm 33:10-12). As Israel became a nation, God’s plan unfolded, pointing to a greater redemption through Christ, who would unite Jews and Gentiles in the Church. This chapter sets the stage for their kingdom years, where new promises will emerge, drawing us closer to the Messiah’s coming.

Chapter 3: The Kingdom of Israel

The story of Israel now takes a grand turn. From a ragtag group of tribes wandering the wilderness, they're ready to become a united nation in the land God promised Abraham. But with great blessing comes great responsibility, and Israel's journey through the era of kings is a tale of triumph, tragedy, and God's unshakable faithfulness. This chapter dives into the rise of Israel's monarchy, the glory of David and Solomon, the heartbreak of division, and the prophets who kept hope alive. Through it all, we'll see a foreshadowing of Jesus, the ultimate King, showing how God's plan weaves Israel's story into ours. It's a rollercoaster of faith and failure, but God's promises - especially a throne that lasts forever - shine through, setting the stage for the Messiah and his coming kingdom.

A Cry for a King

After the judges, Israel was a loose collection of tribes, often doing "whatever was right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25). The chaos of those days - raids by Philistines, idol worship creeping in - left them longing for stability. They looked at neighbouring nations with their kings and armies and said, "We want a king to lead us, like the other nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). Samuel, the last judge and a prophet, was heartbroken; he saw it as a rejection of God's direct rule. But God told him, "It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king" (1 Samuel 8:7). God agreed to give them a king, but with a warning: a human king would tax them, conscript their sons, and take their best fields (1 Samuel 8:10-18). Still, they insisted.

Enter Saul, a tall, handsome Benjaminite who stood "a head taller than anyone else" (1 Samuel 9:2). He started humble, hiding among baggage when chosen (1 Samuel 10:22), but God anointed him through Samuel, and the Spirit filled him to lead (1 Samuel 10:10). Early on, Saul showed promise, defeating the Ammonites to save Jabesh Gilead (1 Samuel 11:11). But cracks soon appeared. He offered a sacrifice only priests could make, assuming he could bend God's rules (1 Samuel 13:8-14). Later, against God's command to destroy the Amalekites completely, he spared their king and livestock, claiming it was for sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:20-21). Samuel confronted him: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). God rejected Saul as king, showing that obedience, not appearance, matters - a lesson the Church echoes in its call to follow Christ wholeheartedly (John 14:15).

David: A Man After God's Heart

God had someone else in mind: David, a shepherd boy from Bethlehem. When Samuel went to anoint a new king from Jesse's sons, David was overlooked, tending sheep. But

God said, “Do not consider his appearance or his height… The Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Anointed with oil, David was filled with the Spirit (1 Samuel 16:13). His heart for God shone early - facing Goliath, a nine-foot Philistine taunting Israel, he said, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty” (1 Samuel 17:45). With a sling and a stone, he felled the giant, showing God’s power through faith (1 Samuel 17:49-50).

David’s life wasn’t easy. Saul, jealous of his fame, hunted him for years. David hid in caves, sparing Saul’s life twice when he could have killed him (1 Samuel 24, 26). Through it all, he wrote psalms, crying, “The Lord is my shepherd; I lack nothing” (Psalm 23:1), and “Create in me a pure heart, O God” (Psalm 51:10). His faith wasn’t perfect - he sinned gravely with Bathsheba, arranging her husband’s death (2 Samuel 11) - but he repented deeply when confronted, unlike Saul (2 Samuel 12:13). God called him “a man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22), not for his perfection but for his pursuit of God.

The most pivotal moment came when God made the Davidic Covenant. He promised David, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16). This wasn’t just about David’s sons ruling Judah - it pointed to a King who’d reign eternally, Jesus, the “Son of David” (Matthew 1:1). David, the shepherd-king who united Israel, prefigures Christ, the Good Shepherd and King of Kings (John 10:11, Revelation 19:16). The Church, as Christ’s body, shares in this promise, called to reign with him (Revelation 20:6).

David unified Israel, made Jerusalem the capital, and brought the ark of the covenant there, dancing with joy (2 Samuel 6:14-15). He longed to build a temple, but God reserved that task for his son, saying David’s hands had shed too much blood (1 Chronicles 22:8). Still, David prepared plans and materials, trusting God’s timing (1 Chronicles 22:14-16). His reign was Israel’s first taste of glory - enemies subdued, borders secure, God’s presence central. It’s a glimpse of the Millennial kingdom, when Christ will rule from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Solomon: Glory and Decline

David’s son Solomon took the throne, and his reign was Israel’s golden age. When God offered him anything, Solomon asked for wisdom to lead well: “Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people” (1 Kings 3:9). Pleased, God gave him wisdom, wealth, and peace (1 Kings 3:12-13). Solomon’s wisdom shone - solving disputes like the two mothers claiming one baby (1 Kings 3:16-28) - and drew visitors like the Queen of Sheba, who marvelled, “The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true” (1 Kings 10:6). He built the temple, a magnificent structure of cedar, gold, and stone, where God’s glory filled the space like a cloud (1 Kings 8:10-11). At its dedication, Solomon prayed, “Will God really dwell on

earth? The heavens… cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27).

The temple was a "type" of Christ, who called himself the true temple (John 2:19-21), and of the Church, where God's Spirit dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16). It stood as Israel's heart, tying them to God's presence, just as Christ ties the Church to God today. Solomon's reign, with peace and prosperity, foreshadowed the Millennial kingdom, where "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:9), pointing to Christ's reign.

But Solomon's heart strayed. He married 700 wives and 300 concubines, suggesting that perhaps he wasn't that wise after all! Many of his romantic interests were foreigners who led him to worship idols like Ashtoreth and Molek (1 Kings 11:3-5). God warned, "Since you have not kept my covenant… I will tear the kingdom from you" (1 Kings 11:11). After Solomon's death, the kingdom split - ten northern tribes became Israel under Jeroboam, two southern tribes became Judah under Rehoboam, Solomon's son (1 Kings 12:16-20). The division was a wound, showing that even the wisest can fall without obedience, a caution for the Church to "hold fast" (Revelation 3:11).

The Divided Kingdom: Idolatry and Prophets

The northern kingdom, Israel, spiralled quickly. Jeroboam set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan, saying, "Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28), echoing the Sinai rebellion. Kings like Ahab, married to Jezebel, worshipped Baal, even sacrificing children (1 Kings 16:31-33). God sent prophets to call them back. Elijah faced 450 Baal prophets on Mount Carmel, challenging, "If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Fire fell from heaven, consuming Elijah's sacrifice, proving God's power (1 Kings 18:38-39). Elijah's zeal and trust in God's power points to Christ's authority and his miracles - like raising a widow's son (1 Kings 17:22) - foreshadow Jesus' works, linking Israel to the Church's mission.

Judah fared better at times, with kings like Hezekiah, who cleansed the temple, and Josiah, who found the lost Book of the Law (2 Kings 18:4, 22:8). But most kings followed idols, ignoring prophets like Isaiah, who warned of judgement but promised a Messiah: "A virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14), and "He was pierced for our transgressions… by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). These prophecies, fulfilled in Jesus, show Israel's role in bringing salvation, a blessing the Church now shares (Galatians 3:14).

The Fall and God's Faithfulness

Disobedience brought judgement. In 722 BC, Assyria conquered northern Israel, scattering the ten tribes (2 Kings 17:6). Judah lasted until 586 BC, when Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar burned Jerusalem and the temple, exiling the people (2 Kings 25:8-11). It seemed the end - land lost, temple gone. But God's promises held. Through Jeremiah, he said, "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place" (Jeremiah 29:10). The Davidic Covenant, promising an eternal throne, stood firm, pointing to Jesus, who'd reign forever (Luke 1:32-33).

The King and the Kingdom

This era brims with "types and shadows", as symbolic Old Testament representations prefigure a New Testament reality in Christ.

David, the shepherd-king, prefigures Christ, the Shepherd-King (John 10:11). The temple, God's dwelling, points to Jesus and the Church (Ephesians 2:21-22). The prophets, calling for repentance, mirror the Church's call to proclaim Christ (Acts 1:8). The Davidic Covenant ties directly to Christ's return to rule from David's throne, with Israel central and the Church reigning alongside (Revelation 20:6). The split kingdom and exile show God's justice but also his mercy, as he preserves a remnant, which Paul describes in Romans 11:5 as having been "chosen by grace".

A Throne That Endures

Israel's kingdom years were a high point and a low point. From David's victories to Solomon's glory, they tasted God's blessing. But idolatry and division led to ruin, proving human kings fall short. Yet God's promise of an eternal throne through David held fast, pointing to Jesus, the King of Kings.

As the Church, we see our roots in Israel's story, grafted into their promises (Romans 11:17), and look to the day when Christ reigns, fulfilling the Davidic Covenant. This sets the stage for exile, return, and the Messiah's coming, where God's plan unfolds further.

Chapter 4: Exile and Return

The story of Israel now enters one of its darkest chapters. The nation that God chose to be his “treasured possession” (Exodus 19:5), blessed with a land and a kingly line, turned away from him, chasing idols and ignoring his prophets. Their disobedience led to a shattering consequence: exile from the promised land. But even in this low point, God’s faithfulness shines through. This chapter traces Israel’s fall to Babylon, their life in a foreign land, the miraculous return God promised, and the hope that kept them looking for a coming King. Through it all, we’ll see foreshadowings of Jesus and the Church, showing how God’s plan for Israel weaves into his bigger story of redemption - a story that includes us today.

The Fall of the Kingdom: Judgement Foretold

After Solomon’s death, Israel split into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom, called Israel, with ten tribes, and the southern kingdom, Judah, with two. The northern kingdom fell quickly into idolatry, worshipping golden calves and Baal under kings like Ahab (1 Kings 16:31-33). God sent prophets like Elijah and Elisha, but the people ignored their calls to repent. In 722 BC, the consequences came. The Assyrian Empire, a brutal war machine, swept in, conquering the northern kingdom and scattering its people across their territory (2 Kings 17:6). The ten tribes were dispersed, some lost to history, though God knew where they went. We are reminded here of God’s sovereignty over nations: “The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples” (Psalm 33:10). Assyria thought it was in control, but God used them to discipline his people, proving his word stands.

Judah, the southern kingdom, lasted longer. Some kings, like Hezekiah and Josiah, turned back to God. Hezekiah destroyed idol altars and trusted God to save Jerusalem from Assyria’s siege, and God delivered, striking 185,000 enemy soldiers in one night (2 Kings 19:35). Josiah, finding the lost Book of the Law, led a revival, tearing down pagan shrines (2 Kings 23:4-7). But most kings followed idols, oppressing the poor and ignoring justice. Prophets like Isaiah warned, “Your leaders mislead you; they turn you from the path” (Isaiah 3:12), while promising a future Messiah: “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit” (Isaiah 11:1). Jeremiah, called the “weeping prophet,” begged Judah to repent, warning of coming judgement: “The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away… it will devour your harvests and your food” (Jeremiah 5:15, 17).

Even though Jeremiah was keeping it real, Judah didn’t listen. In 605 BC, Babylon, a rising power, began attacking. King Nebuchadnezzar took captives, including young Daniel, to Babylon (Daniel 1:1-4). In 597 BC, more were exiled, and in 586 BC, the final blow fell. Babylon besieged Jerusalem, burned the temple Solomon built, tore down the

city's walls, and carried Judah's people into exile (2 Kings 25:8-11). The land, once flowing with milk and honey, lay desolate. The temple, where God's presence dwelt, was rubble. It looked like the end of God's promises - the land lost, the Davidic throne empty, the nation scattered. But God had spoken through Jeremiah: "This is what the Lord says: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place'" (Jeremiah 29:10). Even in judgement, a light of hope remained.

Life in Exile: Faith in a Foreign Land

Exile was a shock. Imagine being uprooted from your home, marched hundreds of miles to a strange land with foreign gods and customs. Babylon was a dazzling city - think hanging gardens and towering ziggurats - but for the Jews, it was a prison. They sat by rivers, weeping, "How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?" (Psalm 137:4). Yet God hadn't abandoned them. He told them through Jeremiah, "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce... Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile" (Jeremiah 29:5, 7). God was still with them, even in Babylon.

Daniel's story shines here. Taken as a teenager, he served in Babylon's court, refusing to defile himself with the king's food, trusting God instead (Daniel 1:8-16). God gave him wisdom to interpret dreams, like Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a statue smashed by a stone - foreshadowing God's eternal kingdom (Daniel 2:34-35). Daniel's friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced a fiery furnace for refusing to bow to a golden statue, declaring, "The God we serve is able to deliver us... But even if he does not, we will not serve your gods" (Daniel 3:17-18). God saved them, walking with them in the fire, much like Christ's presence with his people, and amongst the Church in its trials (Matthew 28:20).

Ezekiel, another exile, saw visions of God's glory leaving the temple (Ezekiel 10:18-19), a heartbreaking sign of judgement. But he also saw hope: dry bones coming to life, symbolising Israel's restoration (Ezekiel 37:11-12). He prophesied, "I will gather you from the nations and bring you back to your own land" (Ezekiel 36:24), a promise tied to the land's divine ownership and future restoration (Isaiah 35:1-7). God said he would do this "for the sake of my holy name" (Ezekiel 36:22), showing his faithfulness isn't based on Israel's merit but his own glory - a truth the Church rests in (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Return: A Miracle of Mercy

True to his word, God stirred the heart of Cyrus, Persia's king, who conquered Babylon in 539 BC. Cyrus declared, "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of

the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:2-3). This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, given 150 years earlier, naming Cyrus as God's instrument (Isaiah 44:28). About 50,000 Jews returned, led by Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, and Joshua, the high priest (Ezra 2:2).

Rebuilding wasn't easy. They laid the temple's foundation, but local enemies - Samaritans and others - opposed them, halting work for years (Ezra 4:4-5). Yet God sent prophets Haggai and Zechariah to spur them on. Haggai asked, "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" (Haggai 1:4). Zechariah promised, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it" (Zechariah 4:9). By 516 BC, the second temple stood, smaller than Solomon's but a sign of God's presence returning (Ezra 6:15-16). This restoration is proof of God's sovereignty, frustrating the plans of nations who opposed his will (Psalm 33:10).

Later, Nehemiah, a cupbearer in Persia, heard Jerusalem's walls were broken. He wept, prayed, and gained the king's permission to rebuild (Nehemiah 2:5). Facing mockery and threats, he rallied the people, and in 52 days, the walls were restored (Nehemiah 6:15). Ezra, a scribe, taught the law, sparking revival (Nehemiah 8:8). These returns - first the temple, then the city - fulfilled Jeremiah's 70-year promise, showing God's faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham (land), even after failure. The temple's rebuilding is reminiscent of Christ, who said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (John 2:19), and of the Church, his body, where God dwells (Ephesians 2:21-22).

The Silent Years: Waiting for the King

After Nehemiah, history grew quiet. Persia gave way to Greece under Alexander the Great, then Rome rose, ruling Judea by Jesus' time. These "silent years" weren't silent to God. Though no prophets spoke, God was preparing the world for the Messiah and setting the stage for the gospel's reach.

The Jews faced new challenges - Hellenistic culture pushed Greek traditions upon them, and while some embraced it, others, like the Maccabees, revolted to preserve their faith (circa 167 BC). The synagogue system grew, keeping the Scriptures central. Prophets ceased, but hope burned. Malachi, the last national prophet, promised, "The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays" (Malachi 4:2), and a messenger to prepare the way (Malachi 3:1), pointing to John the Baptist and Jesus.

The land remained under foreign rule, a shadow of its former glory. Yet prophecies like Isaiah's - "The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and

will settle them in their own land" (Isaiah 14:1) - kept hope alive. This period set the stage for the Messiah, who would fulfill the Davidic Covenant and bring salvation to Jews and Gentiles, birthing the Church.

Restoration and Redemption

The Jewish exile and return are rich with foreshadowings of Jesus and the Church. The temple's destruction and rebuilding mirror Christ's death and resurrection, and the Church as God's dwelling place (1 Corinthians 3:16). Ezekiel's dry bones vision points to Israel's future restoration, fulfilled partly in 1948 but fully in Christ's return (Ezekiel 37:14, Isaiah 66:8).

The exile also shows God's covenantal love. He called Israel his "wife" (Hosea 2:16), and despite their "adultery" with idols, he promised to restore them: "I will betroth you to me forever" (Hosea 2:19). This mirrors Christ's love for the Church, his bride (Ephesians 5:25-27), linking the two peoples in God's heart. He used Babylon, Persia, and opposition to fulfill his plan, proving "the plans of the Lord stand firm forever" (Psalm 33:11).

A Hope That Endures

The exile seemed like the end of Israel's story - land lost, temple gone, people scattered. But God's promises to Abraham (land), Moses (a holy nation), and David (an eternal throne) held fast. The return under Cyrus, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah was a miracle, showcasing God's mercy even after judgement. Yet the full restoration awaited a greater King. This chapter sets the stage for the Messiah's coming, when God's plan for Israel and the world will take a dramatic turn.

Chapter 5: The Coming of the Messiah

The story of God and his people Israel now reaches its pivotal moment. For centuries, God's promises to Abraham (a nation, land, and blessing), Moses (a holy nation), and David (an eternal throne) sustained Israel through slavery, conquest, kings, and exile. After their return from Babylon, they waited under foreign rule - Persia, Greece, Rome - clinging to prophecies of a Messiah who would restore their kingdom and bring salvation. Into this longing stepped Jesus, the Son of David, the Lamb of God, whose life, death, and resurrection changed everything. This chapter traces his coming, the birth of the Church, and the intricate relationship between Israel and the Church, revealing parallels between them that tie God's plan together. It's a story of redemption, rejection, and hope, showing how Israel's Messiah invites the whole world into his family, while keeping Israel central in God's heart.

A World in Waiting

After the return from exile, Israel rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple, but the glory of David's days was a distant memory. By the time of Jesus, Rome ruled Judea with an iron grip, taxing the people and stationing soldiers. Herod the Great, a half-Jewish king appointed by Rome, rebuilt the temple into a stunning structure, but his cruelty - killing baby boys in Bethlehem to protect his throne (Matthew 2:16) - showed his true colours. The Jews were divided: Pharisees clung to the law, Sadducees compromised with Rome, Zealots plotted rebellion, and Essenes hid in desert communities. Yet all hoped for the Messiah, the Anointed One promised by prophets like Isaiah: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

The prophets had painted a vivid picture. Micah said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Isaiah promised a virgin birth: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Zechariah foresaw a King riding a donkey, "righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). Daniel predicted the exact time of his coming (Daniel 9:25-26). Through Israel, this Messiah would come to bless all nations, fulfilling Abraham's covenant (Genesis 12:3).

The Messiah Arrives

Into this restless world, in a humble stable in Bethlehem, Jesus was born to Mary, a virgin, and Joseph, a carpenter from David's line. The angel told Mary, "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David"

(Luke 1:31-32). Shepherds heard angels proclaim, “Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:11). Wise men from the East, guided by a star, called him “the king of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2), offering gifts fit for royalty. Yet Herod’s paranoia led to a massacre, forcing Jesus’ family to flee to Egypt, fulfilling Hosea’s prophecy: “Out of Egypt I called my son” (Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:15).

Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a quiet town, studying the Old Testament Scriptures, and presumably learning carpentry as an apprentice under Joseph. At 30, he began his ministry, baptized by John the Baptist, who declared, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). The Spirit descended like a dove, and God’s voice said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Jesus was no ordinary man - he was God incarnate, fulfilling Isaiah’s “Immanuel, God with us” (Isaiah 7:14). His Jewish identity was central, as he later said, “Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22), tying him to Israel’s calling.

The Ministry of the Messiah

Jesus’ three years of ministry were a whirlwind within Israel. He taught with authority, saying, “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). His parables - like the prodigal son welcomed home (Luke 15:11-32) or the mustard seed growing huge (Mark 4:30-32) - revealed God’s love and kingdom. He healed the blind, lame, and lepers, fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fish, and walked on water (Matthew 14:13-33). He cast out demons, showing power over evil, and raised the dead, like Lazarus (John 11:43-44). Each miracle fulfilled prophecies, like Isaiah’s promise: “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped” (Isaiah 35:5).

But Jesus wasn’t the Messiah many expected, nor was he the political freedom-fighter whom the Jews hoped would save them from Roman rule. The Jews wanted a warrior-king to crush Rome, not a teacher eating with tax collectors and sinners (Luke 15:2). He challenged the Pharisees’ legalism, saying, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27), and claimed divine authority: “Before Abraham was born, I Am!” (John 8:58). This enraged the leaders, who plotted his death, seeing him as a blasphemous threat to their power and Rome’s order. Yet crowds followed him, especially when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9. They shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matthew 21:9). For a moment, it seemed the kingdom was at hand.

The Cross and Resurrection

The excitement didn't last. Betrayed by Judas, one of his twelve disciples, Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane, praying, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Tried before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, he was mocked, beaten, and crucified, a sign above his head reading, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:37). The crowds who cheered him now shouted, "Crucify him!" (John 19:15). On the cross, he cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30), fulfilling Isaiah's suffering servant: "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). His death paid for sin, the ultimate Passover Lamb, linking back to Exodus 12 and forward to the Church's salvation (1 Corinthians 5:7).

But death couldn't hold him. On the third day, Jesus rose, appearing to Mary Magdalene, the disciples, and over 500 others (1 Corinthians 15:6). He ate with them, taught them, and proved he was alive (Luke 24:39-43). His resurrection defeated death, fulfilling Psalm 16:10: "You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay." Before ascending to heaven, He commissioned his followers: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). This command birthed the Church, extending Abraham's blessing to all peoples.

The Birth of the Church

Fifty days after Passover, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came like wind and fire, filling the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 2:2-4). Peter preached to a Jewish crowd, declaring, "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:36). Three thousand believed, were baptized, and formed the early Church, sharing everything and meeting daily (Acts 2:41-47). At first, it was mostly Jews, fulfilling Israel's role as a "light for the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6). Soon, Gentiles joined - Cornelius, a Roman centurion, received the Spirit, reminding us that God's plan included all nations (Acts 10:44-48).

However, this development raised some curly questions. Did the Church replace Israel? Some thought Israel's rejection of Jesus meant God was done with them. Paul, a Pharisee turned apostle, answered in Romans 9-11: "I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means!" (Romans 11:1). He explained that Israel's "stumbling" allowed Gentiles to be "grafted in" to the olive tree of God's people, but the roots remain Israel's (Romans 11:17-18). Israel's role therefore is unique, not replaced, with the Church sharing in their blessings, not taking their place. Paul promised, "All Israel will be saved" when the Messiah returns (Romans 11:26), showing God's plan for both.

Israel, the Church, and the Messiah

The arrival of our Messiah brought to fruition many Old Testament prophecies – both explicit prophecies such as those from the Book of Isaiah, as well as foreshadowings which had formerly remained concealed. For example, Jesus is our Passover Lamb, his blood saving us as Israel was spared in Egypt (1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus is the true temple, raised in three days (John 2:19), and the Church is his body, where God dwells (Ephesians 2:21). As High Priest, he fulfills the law, offering himself once for all (Hebrews 7:27), linking Israel's sacrifices to the Church's salvation. His title "Son of David" ties us directly to the Davidic Covenant, promising an eternal throne (2 Samuel 7:16) during his Millennial reign.

Israel's rejection of their Messiah doesn't void God's promises to them. Rather, Israel remain God's "firstborn" (Exodus 4:22) - and the Church's role in God's plans is as a partner, not a replacement. Jesus' Jewishness underscores this: "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). The Church, grafted in, carries the gospel, fulfilling Abraham's blessing to all nations (Galatians 3:14). Yet Israel's future restoration, promised in Romans 11:26, points to Christ's second coming.

The Messiah's Legacy

Jesus' coming fulfilled centuries of prophecy, uniting Israel's promises in himself. His death and resurrection opened salvation to all, birthing the Church as a family of Jews and Gentiles. Yet God's covenant with Israel stands, as Paul assures, "God's gifts and his call are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). There exists therefore a dual plan - Israel's unique role and the Church's mission to proclaim Christ. As we'll see, Israel's story continues with a modern restoration, signalling the nearness of the Messiah's return, when he will reign as King of the Jews and Lord of all. This chapter bridges the Old Testament promises to the New Testament reality, setting the stage for God's unfolding plan.

Chapter 6: Israel's Restoration

The story of God and His people

Israel now leaps into modern times, yet it is rooted in ancient promises. After the Messiah's coming, Israel faced centuries of dispersion, suffering, and longing for their promised land. The temple was destroyed, Jerusalem trampled, and the Jewish people scattered across the globe. Psalm 2:1-2's words echoed through the ages - "Why do the nations conspire… against the Lord and his anointed?"

Yet God's covenants with Abraham (land, descendants, blessing), Moses (a holy nation), and David (an eternal throne) never wavered. God's plan for them remains central, even as the Church carries the gospel to the nations.

This chapter traces the miraculous restoration of Israel in the 20th century, from a desolate land to a thriving nation, fulfilling ancient prophecies and signalling the nearness of Christ's return. Through the lens of Scripture and subsequent history, we will see how this restoration connects Israel, the Church, and God's unfolding plan, inviting us to watch and pray as history races toward its climax.

The Long Exile: A People Scattered

After Jesus' resurrection and the Church's birth, Israel's story took a painful turn. In 70 AD, Rome crushed a Jewish revolt, destroying Jerusalem and the second temple, just as Jesus predicted: "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). The historian Josephus described the carnage - over a million Jews killed, tens of thousands enslaved. In 135 AD, after another rebellion led by Bar Kokhba, Emperor Hadrian expelled Jews from Jerusalem, renaming the land "Syria Palaestina" to erase their identity. The Jewish people were scattered across Europe, Africa, Asia, and beyond, beginning a nearly 2,000-year diaspora.

Life in exile was harsh. In Europe, Jews faced pogroms - violent mob attacks - expulsions from countries like Spain in 1492, and relentless discrimination. They were blamed for plagues, economic woes, and even fictional conspiracies. In the Middle East and North Africa, they lived as second-class citizens under various empires. Yet they clung to their faith, gathering in synagogues, preserving the Torah, and praying toward Jerusalem. The Passover seder ended with, "Next year in Jerusalem," a cry of hope rooted in God's promise: "I will gather you from the nations and bring you back to your own land" (Ezekiel 36:24).

The land itself suffered. Once "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8), it became a desolate dump under Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Crusader, and Ottoman rule. Mark

Twain, visiting in 1867, wrote of a “desolate country… a silent, mournful expanse,” with barren hills and malaria-ridden swamps. The 1937 Peel Commission Report described Palestine as a wasteland of muddy villages and sparse population. This desolation fulfilled prophecies like Leviticus 26:33: “I will scatter you among the nations… Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins.” Yet the same prophecies promised restoration: “The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it” (Ezekiel 36:34).

The darkest moment came in the 20th century with the Holocaust. From 1933 to 1945, Nazi Germany murdered six million Jews - men, women, children - in death camps like Auschwitz. It was an attempt to wipe out God’s chosen people, echoing Satan’s schemes to thwart God’s plan (Proverbs 19:21). Yet even in this horror, God’s promise held. Survivors emerged, and a movement grew to return to their ancestral homeland, fulfilling the prophetic promise that: “The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations” (Psalm 33:11).

The Zionist Dream: A Call to Return

Hope stirred in the late 19th century with Zionism, a movement to reestablish a Jewish homeland. Leaders like Theodor Herzl, shocked by anti-Semitism in Europe, rallied Jews with the vision of a safe haven in their promised land. Small groups began returning, buying land from Ottoman owners, often at high prices. They drained the swamps, planted trees, and built communities, turning deserts into farmland. By 1917, the Balfour Declaration, issued by Britain, supported “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people,” a step toward fulfilment of God’s promise to Abraham: “To your offspring I will give this land” (Genesis 12:7).

After World War I, Britain controlled Palestine, and Jewish immigration grew, though tensions with Arab residents sparked conflicts. The Holocaust intensified the urgency. Survivors, with nowhere to go, sought refuge in the land God promised. Formerly, the prophet Isaiah asked: “Who has ever heard of such things? Who has ever seen things like this? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment?” (Isaiah 66:8). On May 14, 1948, the answer came.

A Nation Born in a Day

In 1947, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The Jews accepted; neighbouring Arab nations rejected it, vowing to destroy any Jewish state. On May 14, 1948, as British control ended, David Ben-Gurion declared the State of Israel’s independence in Tel Aviv. The next day, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq attacked, outnumbering Israel’s fledgling forces. Yet, against all odds, Israel survived

the 1948 War of Independence, securing its place. This was no mere political event - it fulfilled Isaiah 66:8, a “nation born in a day.”

The miracle deepened in 1967 during the Six-Day War. Surrounded again, Israel launched a pre-emptive strike, defeating Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in six days. Most stunningly, they recaptured Jerusalem’s Old City, including the Western Wall, for the first time since 70 AD. Jesus had said, “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). Here we see the prophetic clock of scripture, ticking toward Christ’s return, with Jerusalem’s restoration signalling the end times. Soldiers wept at the Wall, praying in the city David made Israel’s capital, fulfilling Zechariah’s promise: “The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem” (Zechariah 2:12).

The Land Transformed: A Desert Blooms

The land itself tells a story of God’s faithfulness. Once a desolate, barren wasteland, Israel’s modern rebirth transformed it. The Jewish National Fund planted over 250 million trees, turning hills green. Swamps became farmland, with innovations like drip irrigation - developed in Israel - making the Negev desert bloom, as seen in videos showcasing advanced agriculture (e.g., YouTube: “Israel’s Agricultural Innovation,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mka9VzDsNcc).

Isaiah prophesied, “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom” (Isaiah 35:1). Ezekiel added, “They will say, ‘This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden’” (Ezekiel 36:35). Today, Israel exports fruits, vegetables, and technology, fulfilling Jeremiah’s vision: “They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the Lord - the grain, the new wine and the olive oil” (Jeremiah 31:12).

This transformation isn’t just agricultural - it’s spiritual. God said, “I am doing this so all may know that it is the work of the Lord Almighty, to protect My holy name” (Ezekiel 36:22-23). The land’s renewal counters centuries of desolation, showing God’s sovereignty over history and nations (Psalm 33:10-12). It also challenges misconceptions, like claims that “Palestinians” were a distinct people displaced in 1948. Historical records, including the Peel Commission, show a mix of Arabs, Bedouins, and others in a sparsely populated land, with no unified “Palestinian” identity until the 20th century. God’s promise to Abraham’s descendants through Isaac, not Ishmael, anchors Israel’s claim (Genesis 17:19).

Israel and the Church: Partners in God's Plan

What does this mean for the Church? Some Christians, misreading history, think Israel's restoration is irrelevant, assuming the Church replaced Israel. Romans 9-11 clearly refutes this.

Paul wrote, "Did God reject his people? By no means!" (Romans 11:1). The Church is "grafted in" to Israel's olive tree, sharing their spiritual blessings, not replacing their role (Romans 11:17-18). Israel's return in 1948 and Jerusalem's recapture in 1967 are signs of God's faithfulness to his covenants - Abraham's land, David's throne - promises that include a future for Israel. Paul promised, "All Israel will be saved," when the Messiah returns to "turn godlessness away from Jacob" (Romans 11:26, citing Isaiah 59:20).

The Church's role is to support Israel, not supplant it. We are urged as believers to pray for Jerusalem's peace (Psalm 122:6) and share the gospel, knowing salvation came through Israel's Messiah (John 4:22). Israel's restoration is a wake-up call for the Church, signalling that "the time is near" (Revelation 1:3). Jesus warned, "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near" (Luke 21:20), but also that its restoration marks the end of Gentile dominion (Luke 21:24). The Church, as a partner, rejoices in Israel's return, seeing it as a foreshadowing of the ultimate restoration when Christ reigns.

Restoration and Eschatology

Israel's modern rebirth is a prophetic forerunner of even greater and more amazing things to come. The return from Babylon in 538 BC prefigured 1948, both fulfilling God's promise to gather his people (Ezekiel 36:24). The desolate land blooming mirrors the spiritual renewal promised when "I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 39:29). This prophecy ties into Christ's return, when Israel will "look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him" (Zechariah 12:10), belatedly embracing Jesus as Messiah. This links to the Church, which already knows him, and both will share in his kingdom (Revelation 20:6).

The land itself is symptomatic of God's redemptive work. Just as Eden was lost but promised to be restored (Isaiah 51:3), Israel's transformation from wasteland to garden points to the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1). The Church, grafted into Israel's promises, shares this hope, as Paul wrote, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

A Sign of the Times

Israel's restoration in 1948 and 1967 is a modern miracle, fulfilling prophecies like Isaiah 66:8 and Ezekiel 36:34-35. It is not just a political event - it's God keeping his word for "the sake of his holy name" (Ezekiel 36:22). The land's renewal, from swamps to vineyards, reflects God's power to restore what's broken, a hope the Church clings to in Christ. Israel's return signals the nearing of Christ's return, when he will fulfill the Davidic Covenant as King in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32-33). For the Church, this is a call to watch, pray, and proclaim the gospel, knowing we are grafted into Israel's story (Romans 11:17). The next chapter will explore that future - when the King returns to reign, uniting Israel and the Church in his eternal kingdom.

Chapter 7: The Future: Christ's Return and Reign

The story of God, Israel, and the Church now reaches its breathtaking conclusion. From Abraham's call to Israel's rebirth in 1948, God's promises have woven a tapestry of redemption across the centuries.

Now, we stand on the edge of history, looking to the future when Jesus, the Messiah, returns to fulfill every covenant: Abraham's land and blessing, Moses' holy nation, David's eternal throne. This chapter explores Christ's second coming, the salvation of Israel, the Millennial reign, and the eternal state, revealing Scriptural parallels that connect Israel and the Church in God's glorious kingdom. It's a story of victory, restoration, and hope, calling us to live ready for the King's return.

The Promise of His Coming

Jesus' first coming fulfilled prophecies of a suffering servant, born in Bethlehem, dying for sins, and rising again (Isaiah 53:5, Micah 5:2). But he promised to return - not as a humble servant, but as King of Kings. Before ascending, he told his disciples, "You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). The angels confirmed, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go" (Acts 1:11). This is the climax of God's plan: Christ's return to complete salvation, judge evil, establish his throne, and restore the land, fulfilling every promise to Israel and blessing the Church.

The Old Testament prophets saw this day. Zechariah wrote, "On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two" (Zechariah 14:4). Daniel saw "one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven… His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14). The New Testament echoes this. John's Revelation paints a vivid picture: "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all peoples on earth will mourn because of him" (Revelation 1:7). This return ties directly to Israel, with Jesus reigning from Jerusalem, fulfilling the Davidic Covenant: "Your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16).

The Time of Trouble and Israel's Salvation

Before Christ's return, the world will face a time of unprecedented turmoil. Jesus warned, "For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equalled again" (Matthew 24:21). This corresponds to the words of the prophet Daniel who foretold a "time of distress such as has not

happened from the beginning of nations until then" (Daniel 12:1). This period is often referred to as the Great Tribulation.

Revelation describes the time of the Great Tribulation with seals, trumpets, and bowls - judgements of war, famine, plagues, and cosmic upheaval (Revelation 6-16). A figure called the Antichrist will rise, deceiving many, opposing God, and persecuting believers (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, Revelation 13:7). Israel will face intense pressure, with Jerusalem surrounded by armies, as Jesus predicted (Luke 21:20).

Yet in this darkness, God's promise to Israel shines. Zechariah prophesied, "I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child" (Zechariah 12:10). This moment - Israel's recognition of Jesus as their Messiah - is pivotal. Paul wrote, "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:25-26). This is a key reason for Christ's return: to save Israel, fulfilling God's irrevocable call (Romans 11:29).

This salvation is both spiritual and physical. Ezekiel saw Israel's restoration as dry bones coming to life, receiving God's Spirit (Ezekiel 37:14). Jeremiah promised a new covenant: "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts… They will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest" (Jeremiah 31:33-34). This covenant, fulfilled in Jesus' blood (Luke 22:20), will reach its fullness when Israel embraces their Messiah, joining the Church in worship, reverence and awe. This will finally unite the "firstborn" (Exodus 4:22) with the "grafted in" Church (Romans 11:17), bringing them together in God's great family.

The Second Coming: Victory and Judgement

When the Tribulation reaches its peak, Jesus will return in glory. Revelation describes him: "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True… His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns… He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God" (Revelation 19:11-13). He will descend to the Mount of Olives, splitting it as Zechariah foretold, and defeat the Antichrist and his armies at Armageddon (Revelation 19:19-21). Satan will be bound for a thousand years, unable to deceive the nations (Revelation 20:2-3).

This victory fulfills God's sovereignty over evil, as foretold: "The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples" (Psalm 33:10). The Antichrist's defeat echoes earlier defeats like Pharaoh's drowning in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:28),

showing God's power over those who oppose his people. For the Church, this is a moment of triumph. Believers who died in Christ will rise, and those alive will be transformed, meeting him in the air: "The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command… and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). This "rapture," debated in timing among scholars, unites the Church with Christ, ready to reign with him.

The Millennial Kingdom: Israel and the Church United

With evil judged, Jesus will establish his Millennial kingdom, a thousand year reign from Jerusalem, as Revelation states: "They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). This will fulfill the Davidic Covenant, with Jesus, the Son of David, ruling on his throne (Luke 1:32-33). Isaiah painted this kingdom: "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat… They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6, 9). Jerusalem will be the world's capital, with nations streaming to learn from the Lord: "Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob'" (Isaiah 2:3).

Israel will be central, restored to their land in fullness. Ezekiel prophesied, "I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken" (Ezekiel 36:28). The twelve tribes will dwell in peace, their borders secure, their temple rebuilt, as Ezekiel's vision describes (Ezekiel 40-48). This temple, debated as literal or symbolic, signifies God's presence among his people, an event fulfilled in Christ and extended to the Church, his body (Ephesians 2:21). The Church will reign with Christ, as Revelation promises: "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). This echoes Israel's calling as a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6) and the Church's as a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), uniting their roles.

The Millennium will showcase God's justice and blessing. The land, already blooming since 1948, will flourish beyond imagination, fulfilling Jeremiah's vision: "They will rejoice in the bounty of the Lord - the grain, the new wine and the olive oil" (Jeremiah 31:12). And so too the Abrahamic Covenant's land promise, with Israel's restoration completed under Christ's rule. The Church, drawn from every nation, will serve alongside Israel, fulfilling the blessing to all peoples (Genesis 12:3).

The Final Rebellion and Eternal State

After a thousand years, Satan will be released briefly, deceiving nations to rebel against Christ (Revelation 20:7-8). This final uprising, crushed by fire from heaven, shows humanity's persistent sinfulness, even under perfect rule (Revelation 20:9). Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire, joining the Antichrist and false prophet, where "they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10). This fulfills God's justice, and removes evil forever.

Then comes the Great White Throne judgement, where all humanity faces God: "I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened… The dead were judged according to what they had done" (Revelation 20:12). Those whose names are in the Book of Life enter eternity; others face eternal separation. This judgement fulfills God's righteousness (Psalm 33:5).

Finally, God creates a new heaven and new earth: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away… I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride" (Revelation 21:1-2). God will dwell with his people: "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them… He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:3-4). The twelve gates of the New Jerusalem will be inscribed with the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:12). Israel and the Church, united as God's family, will live in this eternal city, fulfilling all covenants - Abraham's blessing, Moses' holy nation, and David's throne.

Prophecy Fulfilled

Israel's restoration in the Millennium mirrors their 1948 return, a partial fulfilment pointing to the ultimate (Ezekiel 36:24). The temple, rebuilt in glory, reflects Christ's presence and the Church as God's dwelling (Ephesians 2:21). Jesus as the Son of David fulfills the Davidic Covenant with his throne eternal (Luke 1:32). The new Jerusalem symmetrically echoes Eden, restored forever, with the Church and Israel sharing Abraham's promise as "heirs" (Galatians 3:29). The defeat of Satan fulfills Genesis 3:15, the Seed crushing the serpent, tying the story's beginning to its end.

This sees God's gracious plan fulfilled, albeit at great cost to himself: the humiliating and agonising death of his Son at the hands of mankind, whom he sought to save. The sacrifice made to redeem man is incalculable; however, when everything is brought to completion, we will sing their praises and give them the honour and glory they so richly deserve throughout eternity.

Living for the King

Christ's return will fulfill every promise. Israel will be saved, their land restored, their Messiah reigning from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:9). The Church, grafted into these promises, will reign with him, united in purpose (Revelation 20:6). This is the climax of God's plan: salvation completed, evil judged, the throne established, the land restored.

For now, we're called to watch: "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (Matthew 24:42). The Church must proclaim the gospel, pray for Israel's peace (Psalm 122:6), and live ready for the King. This story, from Abraham to eternity, invites us to trust God's plan, knowing Israel and the Church together will worship in the new Jerusalem, where "the Lord will be king over the whole earth" (Zechariah 14:9).

Chapter 8: The Church's Heart Toward Israel

The story we've journeyed through - from Abraham's call to Israel's modern rebirth and the promise of Christ's return - is a tapestry of God's unbreakable love, woven with threads of promise, rebellion, redemption, and hope. Across seven chapters, we've seen God choose Israel as his "treasured possession" (Exodus 19:5), guide them through slavery, conquest, kings, and exile, fulfill his promises in Jesus the Messiah, and restore Israel to their land in 1948, signalling the nearness of his return. We see that "The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations" (Psalm 33:11).

As the Church, grafted into Israel's blessings (Romans 11:17), we stand at a unique crossroads in history. But how should we, as modern Christians, feel about Israel and the Jewish people? How do we navigate the strained history between us, view the modern State of Israel, respond to Middle East wars, and lovingly encourage Jews to see Jesus as their Messiah? This final chapter reflects on these questions, drawing from the biblical narrative to offer a clear, truthful, and compassionate path forward.

Reflecting on the Story: Israel and the Church Intertwined

The story began with God's covenant to Abraham - land, descendants, and a blessing for all nations (Genesis 12:2-3). Through slavery in Egypt, the Exodus, the Mosaic Covenant, and the conquest of Canaan, Israel became a nation set apart to reflect God's glory (Exodus 19:6). The Davidic Covenant promised an eternal throne (2 Samuel 7:16), fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David (Luke 1:32). Despite Israel's failures - idolatry, exile, and rejecting their Messiah - God's promises held firm, restoring them from Babylon and again in 1948 (Isaiah 66:8). The Church, born at Pentecost, carries the gospel to the world, grafted into Israel's spiritual roots (Romans 11:17-18). Israel remains God's "firstborn" (Exodus 4:22), with a unique role tied to the land and covenants, while the Church shares in Abraham's blessing, proclaiming salvation through Christ (Galatians 3:14).

Our stories are irrevocably intertwined. The Jewish Passover lamb prefigures Jesus, "our Passover lamb" (1 Corinthians 5:7). The temple points to Christ's body and the Church as God's dwelling (John 2:19, Ephesians 2:21). Israel's restoration in 1948 echoes their return from Babylon, both foreshadowing the ultimate restoration when "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26). These connections show God's unified plan: Israel as the root, the Church as branches, together bearing fruit for his glory. As we reflect, we see that loving Israel isn't optional for the Church - it's biblical, rooted in God's heart: "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3).

The Strained History: A Call to Repentance

The historical relationship between Christians and Jews is a painful chapter, one we must face honestly. The Bible calls us to love, yet history shows failure. In the early centuries, as Christianity spread, some leaders distanced themselves from Judaism, ignoring Paul's warning: "Do not be arrogant toward the branches... You do not support the root, but the root supports you" (Romans 11:18). By the Middle Ages, the Church, wielding power, often fuelled anti-Semitism. Crusaders attacked Jewish communities en route to Jerusalem. Medieval Europe saw Jews blamed for plagues, expelled from nations like England (1290) and Spain (1492), and confined to ghettos. The Church's silence during the Holocaust, when six million Jews were murdered, remains a stain, though some Christians risked their lives to save Jews, like Corrie ten Boom's family.

This history wasn't biblical - it betrayed Scripture. Jesus, a Jew, said, "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). Paul longed for Israel's salvation, willing to be "cut off from Christ for the sake of my people" (Romans 9:3). Therefore, Replacement theology, which claims the Church supplanted Israel, is clearly unbiblical.

The Church must therefore repent for past wrongs, as God commands: "Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God" (Joel 2:13). This means confessing historical sins, learning from them, and loving our Jewish brothers as God does. For the Church, this is personal - our faith rests on Israel's Messiah, and our hope is tied to their promises (Galatians 3:29).

The Modern State of Israel: A Prophetic Miracle

How should we feel about the modern State of Israel, reborn in 1948? The Bible points to awe and gratitude. Israel's restoration is a fulfilment of prophecy: "Who has ever heard of such things? Can a country be born in a day?" (Isaiah 66:8). On May 14, 1948, Israel declared independence, surviving immediate attack by five nations. In 1967, the Six-Day War saw Jerusalem's Old City reclaimed, fulfilling Jesus' words: "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The land, once desolate per Mark Twain's 1867 account and the 1937 Peel Commission, now blooms with vineyards, tech hubs, and innovations like drip irrigation (Ezekiel 36:35, Isaiah 35:1).

This isn't mere politics - God is keeping his word to Abraham: "To your offspring I will give this land" (Genesis 12:7). Ezekiel prophesied, "I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land" (Ezekiel 36:24), and God said it's "for the sake of my holy name" (Ezekiel 36:22). This serves as a prophetic clock, signalling Christ's return. Christians should feel joy, not indifference nor loathing, at Israel's rebirth. It's a sign of God's faithfulness, as Psalm 33:11 declares: "The plans of the Lord

stand firm forever." Yet we must avoid blind nationalism - Israel, like all nations, isn't perfect. Our support is biblical, rooted in God's covenants, not political agendas.

The Middle East Wars: A Biblical Lens

The modern Middle East is a cauldron of conflict. Israel faces threats from groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and nations like Iran, with wars flaring since 1948, including recent escalations (e.g., Gaza conflicts post-2023). How should the Church view these? The Bible offers clarity without sentimentality. Psalm 122:6 commands, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May those who love you be secure.'" Peace is God's desire, but Scripture warns of conflict before Christ's return: "You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come" (Matthew 24:6).

Zechariah foresaw Jerusalem as "a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling" (Zechariah 12:2), a focal point of global tension. What is happening in Israel right now is not new; it is a recurring attempt by Satan to eliminate God's chosen people, with the aim of disrupting God's plan for Christ's return, which will bring this age to a close and usher in the salvation of the world.

This is connected to end-time events, with nations gathering against Israel before Christ's return (Revelation 16:16). Christians should grieve the loss of life - Jewish, Arab, or otherwise - because God "does not take pleasure in the death of anyone" (Ezekiel 18:32). But we must discern truth. The "Palestinian" identity, as a distinct national claim, emerged in the 20th century, often fuelled by opposition to Israel's restoration. Biblical promises give the land to Abraham's descendants through Isaac (Genesis 17:19), not Ishmael, though God loves all peoples. The Church should pray for peace, support justice, and avoid taking sides in human politics, focusing instead on God's promise: "The Lord will mediate between nations and will settle international disputes" (Isaiah 2:4).

Encouraging Messianic Faith: A Heart of Love

How can the Church encourage Jews to consider Jesus as their Messiah without reopening old wounds? The history of forced conversions, pogroms, and "Christian" anti-Semitism makes this delicate, but the Bible calls us to share the gospel with love: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16). Paul's heart ached for Israel's salvation (Romans 10:1), and ours should too.

First, we must build trust. Historical wounds require humility - acknowledging past sins and indiscretions like the Crusades or the Holocaust inaction shows sincerity. Second,

we share Jesus as Israel's Messiah, not a foreign god. He fulfilled prophecies: born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), pierced for sins (Isaiah 53:5), riding a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). Pointing to these in the Hebrew Scriptures (Tanakh) respects Jewish heritage. Third, we live the gospel - showing Christ's love through kindness, not coercion. Pressuring Jews risks reviving pain; instead, we pray, as Paul did, for their eyes to open (Romans 11:25). Messianic Jews, who embrace Jesus while keeping their Jewish identity, model this bridge, fulfilling the vision of "all Israel" saved (Romans 11:26) and celebrating Passover with a focus on Jesus as the Lamb, blending Jewish tradition with Christian faith.

Living in the Light of His Story

The Bible calls the Church to several responses. First, gratitude for Israel's role. Without them, we'd have no Scriptures, no Messiah, no salvation (John 4:22). Second, humility, recognising we're grafted into their roots, not the other way around (Romans 11:18). Third, prayer for Israel's peace and salvation (Psalm 122:6, Romans 10:1). Fourth, action - supporting Israel's right to exist, as God promised the land (Genesis 17:8), while loving all people, including Arabs, as Christ commands (Matthew 5:44). Finally, readiness, as Israel's restoration signals Christ's return: "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28).

An awe-inspiring parallel emerges here: Israel's journey - exile, return, restoration - mirrors the Church's journey from sin to redemption to glory. Just as Israel awaits full restoration, the Church awaits Christ's return, when both will dwell together with God (Revelation 21:3). Israel and the Church, distinct yet joined, together fulfil God's plan.

Conclusion: A Heart Aligned with God's

The story of God, Israel, and the Church is one of faithfulness. Israel, chosen as God's "firstborn," carries his covenants; the Church, grafted in, spreads his gospel. The modern State of Israel's rebirth fulfills prophecy, a sign of God's sovereignty and Christ's nearing return. Despite a painful history, the Church must love Jews with humility, pray for peace amid wars, and share Jesus gently, trusting God to open hearts. God's plan centres on Israel's restoration and Christ's reign, with the Church as a partner. May we live with gratitude, proclaiming, "The Lord reigns forever; your God, O Zion, reigns for all generations. Praise the Lord" (Psalm 146:10). This story calls us to love Israel, trust God, and watch for our King.

Amen!